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354 *Observations on the Manor Court-house of Belfast.* [May.

I do not suspect M—— of such insidiousness. *Him* I believe not only sincere, but ardent and zealous in the cause of toleration. And therefore it is, I would detach him from the advocacy of an institution, that does not, as I can find, merit the confidence of conscientious Catholics, nor, as I suspect, ever will show any disposition to meet them in a spirit of conciliation. They are not only a "Protestant," they are an *Anti-Catholic* establishment; because, though they *did* concede to Catholics their own translation, (a thing, I admit, of minor importance,) they would give them *even this* on Anti-Catholic principles; that is, not only without notes, but to the *exclusion of Church authority*. This is their spirit, and even their language: and the Catholic, who, in deference to this reigning idea, yielded up his comments to leave judgment free, would lend his influence towards the propagation of the great Protestant principle among the illiterate of his communion. *This* might be dangerous. Though I find that Catholics look upon the plain sense of Scripture, even in any translation, to be favourable to their doctrines; though I have not heard of any proselytes to the religion of Protestants from the reading of their version, still the acquiescence of respectable Catholics in this rejection of authority, *might* prove dangerous to the faith of the simple.

Having trespassed so far on your space, without, however, exhausting the subject, I shall not trouble you long with a contest about anonymous signatures, or any discussion as to how far I may be entitled to the name I have assumed. *Let my arguments be examined.* Yet I shall not resign my title of *Free-thinker*, because there are some inquiries in which I believe I have ar-

rived at safe conclusions; or because there are *some subjects* which, *I have found*, are not open for inquiry;* some points, in fine, as to which I am no longer a seeker. Above all, I shall not surrender the title, because I claim to the conscientious and cherished opinions of others, the same indulgence I ask for my own.

....."*Scimus, et hanc veniam, Petimusque damusque vicissim.*"

I am, &c.
A REAL FREETHINKER.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

AS it may prove too arduous a task "to remove the jail and court-house from Carrickfergus to Belfast," as has been seriously proposed, it would neither be impossible nor impracticable for the inhabitants of Belfast to build a decent court house for themselves: and if unsuccessful in removing the assize-courts, the same building would serve for another purpose, not less necessary, and perhaps more useful to them, namely, a manor court-house and marshalsea.

The present wretched accommodation for debtors is well known; it is also in every one's recollection, how the manor court has been dragged from place to place, ever since the old market house was converted into a provost prison; and it is not a little surprizing, that no public notice has ever been taken of so flagrant an inconvenience. If the emoluments of that house are not sufficient

* From the strange irritability of some people, one would suppose the subject of Bible Societies to be "holy ground;" and that any discussion as to the immaculate character of a *Bible Society*, would be equally profane, as to call in question the authority of the *Bible itself*!

to afford a decent house for its accommodation, it is full time that the inhabitants should provide one for themselves.

The first removal, I believe, this court underwent, was from the old market-house to a room in a small public-house in Smithfield; from thence to a shabby apartment over the black-hole adjoining the old market-house. When that dungeon was demolished, along with the old market-house, the court was again removed to a better apartment, although by much too small, in Crown-entry. The next remove was to part of a waste house, or rather shed, in Fountain-lane, which had once been used as a blacksmith's forge. Here, indeed, there was plenty of room; the earthen floor was damp enough to keep the feet comfortably cool; the seats for the accommodation of the Seneschal, the court and the jury, were deal-boards, supported by props; and the apartment was lighted partly from the door, and partly by a half-glazed window. When a juror answered to his name, and was desired to "walk into the box," he would in vain look round to find it, unless he could mistake the forge hearth, where the smith's bellows had been fixed, for a jury-box. From this natural habitation of bats, (which was dignified with the appellation of "my court-house,") those creatures were dispossessed by the court; as often as it sat, for some years.

The last shift has been to a small upper apartment in the new prison, Ferguson's-entry, which, in respect of room, is a complete contrast to the former in Fountain-lane; for the first time the court sat here, the people attending according to summons at 12 o'clock, the crowd were packed together as close as the unfortunate victims were in the black-

hole at Calcutta, for nearly two hours before the court opened!

Although manor-courts have had their origin in the ancient Feudal system, and are therefore a remaining badge of vassalage, they are, since the alterations and amendments by the late Lord Hillsborough's bill, when properly conducted, the fairest and least expensive mode of recovering all small debts.

When, therefore, we contemplate the population of Belfast, the wealth and respectability of its inhabitants, the late great increase of the number of its manufactories, and consequent increase of the number of civil causes that must arise in the town and its neighbourhood, it is matter of regret, that any civil actions within the cognizance of the manor-court, should be sent to the quarter sessions at Antrim or Carrickfergus, that could be tried at home with much less expense and inconvenience to the parties, than at Quarter Sessions:

But on the contrary, with all these advantages in view, and within our reach, we may be at liberty to suppose a case.

If a Seneschal should be appointed, who would consider the manor court as a sort of moveable utensil, calculated merely for his own emolument; without any view to public utility, he will hold courts as often, and no oftener, than just suits his own private convenience; and if instead of holding courts every three weeks, they are adjourned from time to time, for as many months, so that as many trials may be crammed into one court day, as would, if fully investigated, occupy two or three, the vexation and disappointment caused by such delay, may be such as (in processes at least) would make the remedy worse than the disease. If the Seneschal appoints

a drunken, worthless, unprincipled marshal-keeper, without property, or giving security; if he entrusts the choice of jurors to this worthless deputy, and allows him to accept of paupers and swindlers from amongst his own drunken associates, as good bail in matters of property, without requiring such bail to *justify*, and thereby to defraud the honest creditor, by encouraging the use of *writs of error*: in such a case, it would be evident, that the only use of a manor-court so conducted, would be to put money into the pockets of the Seneschal, his deputy the jailor, and the pettyfogging Attornies and Bailiffs of the court, at the expenses of those clients who could be so ill advised, as to apply for redress to such a tribunal.

SPECTATOR.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

AT a period when the Lagan Canal is undergoing a repair, it may be satisfactory to lay before the public a calculation of the extent of the lakes in the County of Down, which might be brought to afford an additional supply of water to the head level. The expense of procuring them, would probably not be so great as the scheme projected last year of diverting the river Lagan above Maralin, for that purpose.

Lakes that supply Revaract River.

1st. Skelly's, about	20 Acres.
2d. Girvin's,	10
3d. Gill's,	20
4th. Gill's,	20
5th. Bow,	80
6th. Dunlough,	10
7th. Ennie,	120
8th. Maghranock,	60
9th. Bresagh,	60

400 Acres,

at the lowest computation, covered at the driest season; all the Lakes

are connected with Bresagh, the outlet of which is about 30 feet wide. A sluice put on the outlet, and kept to winter mark, would be, I believe, an ample supply for the canal.

J.C.H.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

ADHERING, as I do, to the sentiments contained in the following fugitive sheet, which was printed in the year 1800; and wishing, as far as I can, to give them a degree of permanence, I request you will make a record of them in a page or two of your Magazine. I am, &c.

W.D.

May 1st, 1813.

A PROTEST FROM ONE OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND AGAINST AN UNION WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

WHEREAS it has been deemed expedient for the purpose of consolidating the executive power of the Empire, and of meeting the temporary exigencies of the state, to extinguish the Irish Constitution, and to abolish the legislative independence of this Kingdom, immediately, totally, and for ever; I do think, that every Irishman, without regard to his rank or significance in life, while contemplating that common insignificance which is about to level all rank and station into the same low and despicable equality: every Irishman, without regard to a difference in the colours of party, or the rites of religion, who worships the same God, and is born and bred in the same land: every Irishman, without being awed by power, seduced by reward, or scared by ridicule, is summoned, at this extremity, not merely by honour or interest, but by the urgency of self-preservation; not merely by motives of per-